

That is why I introduced the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Act and it is why it's so important that we move quickly to pass it.

My bill would take three big steps forward toward tackling the serious problems facing this vulnerable group.

First of all, it would make more front-line homeless service providers eligible to receive special needs grants.

This would help organizations in Washington State and across the country help support families like Natalie's.

It would also expand special needs grants to cover homeless male veterans with children as well as the dependents of homeless veterans themselves.

And it would extend the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program to provide: workforce training, job counseling, child care services, and placement services to homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children.

It is so important that we not just provide immediate support but we also make sure our veterans have the resources and support they need to get back on their feet.

This is a very personal issue for me.

Growing up, I saw firsthand the many ways military service can affect both veterans and their families.

My father served in World War II and was among the first soldiers to land on Okinawa. He came home as a disabled veteran and was awarded the Purple Heart.

Like many soldiers of his generation, my father did not talk about his experiences during the war. In fact, we only really learned about them by reading his journals after he passed away.

And I think that experience offers a larger lesson about veterans in general. They are reluctant to call attention to their service, and they are reluctant to ask for help.

That is why we have got to publicly recognize their sacrifices and contributions.

It is up to us to make sure that they get the recognition they have earned.

And it is up to us to guarantee they get the services and support they deserve.

This bill passed through the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee with strong bi-partisan support.

Because supporting our veterans should not be about politics, it should be about what kind of country we want the United States to be. And about what our priorities are as a nation.

That is why I am proud to stand here today: for Natalie, her children, and families just like hers across the country.

At this time, with our economy struggling—it is a very tough time, particularly for our veterans who are returning home—the most vulnerable population today is our women because many of the transitional housing and projects for our veterans don't have facilities for women or for women with children or, as a matter of fact, for

men who are veterans coming home to young children.

So this is an extremely important piece of legislation. This had bipartisan support coming out of our committee. I will keep coming to the floor to ask for unanimous consent because I cannot go home and look at someone who served our country with distinction and honor who today is living on the street because the Senate is objecting. I will just let my colleagues know I will keep working on this because it is the right thing to do.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

GULF OILSPILL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I wish to give the Senate a report on the gulf oilspill.

Mother Nature is now developing hurricane and it is very likely within a couple of days of reaching hurricane strength, which is 75 miles per hour or greater, but Mother Nature is smiling on us in that it is going on a more westerly track. It will probably go into the coast at northern Mexico, possibly southern Texas, but it will keep it away from heading into the area to the east of Louisiana where the oilspill is. Of course, if it had gone on that trajectory, then one of the worst nightmares would be that it takes all that oil on the surface, and in the rage of a hurricane, the counterclockwise rotation of the winds would take that right on to shore over the barrier islands, into the bays and estuaries where oil, once contaminating all the marsh grasses, becomes so difficult to get out.

The effects of that we don't know. It could be for years to come, just as we don't know the effects of the subsurface oil that is there, that the scientists have identified, that BP denies, that even some of our Federal officials in NOAA deny. We are waiting on their report. Of course, we won't know the effects of that for years. We have a lot of uncertainty here. But at least for the moment, the hurricane is not bearing down on the oilspill, although let me remind my colleagues that we have a very active hurricane season coming up.

What it is going to do, this first hurricane, is make the seas choppy and the waves large, even that far away. As a result, the skimming operations are going to be thwarted.

That brings me to the topic of the skimming operations.

I am grateful, since the U.S. Navy had identified 27 additional small skimmers that are stationed in ports around the country, that those have now been tasked to come to our inland waterways that are calm waters such as ports so that when the oil comes through the passes, through the inlets and gets into those calm water bays, we will have those skimmers there positioned to try to get it skimmed up before it gets into the marsh grasses. But why did it take so long? Why, of the 27, have only 9 been put on trailers and are on their way to the gulf? Why are the remaining 18 having to go through the legal ramifications, which I understand the law is the law, not to be completed until June 30, which is tomorrow, but why wasn't this done weeks ago? Because people do not have the sense of urgency that we do down on the gulf coast. They are not seeing their lives destroyed and their livelihoods eliminated and their culture completely changed.

Of course, the effects of this for years, with 60,000—now people are finally getting around to acknowledging that it is 60,000—barrels of oil a day gushing into the gulf. It is filling up the gulf. It is affecting us and our way of life.

There are how many States on the gulf? Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the big one, with the most coastline, Florida, my native land. How many is that? That is five. The remaining 45 States are not affected. They can see it nightly on the TV. They can rant and rave, and they can see that gusher that continues. It is there on TV for us to see, and we can be mad about that. But unless one lives there and understands the daily effect on people's lives, they can't get that sense of outrage we have. So is it any wonder I have such impatience when five of my counties on the gulf coast have submitted requisition forms for the moneys they have advanced and they still have not been paid? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see people lose incomes because cancellations are coming in on a daily basis? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see local governments not being able to plan on their budgets because they don't know what their local tax revenue is going to be because of a diminution of business? Is it any wonder those of us on the gulf have a sense of outrage as we see the fear, the trepidation, the anxiety about the future about what their livelihoods are?

I am going down to the White House now to talk about the one thing we can make something good come out of this travesty, and that is the future of trying to wean ourselves from our dependence on oil by aggressively going after